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THE COLLEGE REQUIREMENTS AND THE SECONDARY-SCHOOL WORK¹

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When I was asked to read a paper at this conference, another subject than the one we are to consider was proposed to me. I suggested the change, in the belief that our present subject is one of vital interest. The vexatious question of the college-entrance requirements in Latin and Greek cannot be accepted as settled, and it is of the greatest importance that the present movement toward uniformity should not be allowed to fix finally upon the schools a fundamentally wrong and unfair standard, one that must inevitably contract their ideals to the narrowest utilitarianism and wholly vitiate their work. It has long been my conviction that the teachers in our secondary schools could bring about a better state of things if they would examine the question independently of college influence and express their views boldly without regard to college frowns or favors. Recent deliberations and discussions in which representatives of the schools have taken part have been dominated by men from the colleges or by college views. At the present time the attitude of many colleges is one of arrogance, tempered by the desire for students; the attitude of most schools servile. I do not mean that either attitude is conscious, and I realize that both are natural. But arrogance is no less arrogance when it seems to the arrogant a mere assertion of superior wisdom for the guidance of the erring or the maintenance of rights, and servility is no less servility when it seems to the servile the counsel of expediency for the attainment of a desirable end. The college feels that it is the sole arbiter of the preparation of the applicant for admission, and that it is its duty to impose upon the school a correct standard of work. The school knows that it is judged largely by its success or failure in getting

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boys and girls into college. Both need a clearer understanding of the situation, a higher sense of their duty to each other, a better criterion of judgment.

What, then, do the colleges wish? I take it that they desire evidence that the applicant for admission has the power and has had the training that will enable him to do their work effectively. The entrance examination has both a general and a particular aspect. It determines whether the applicant is prepared to do the freshman work in the given subject; it may also be used, together with the examinations in other subjects, to determine whether the applicant has sufficient ability and has had adequate training for such work as is required of freshmen in the various courses open to them. The latter is the more important in the case of colleges allowing to the student from the outset a wide choice of studies; the former, where the course of study requires the continuance during the freshman year of the subjects in which the applicant is examined. In neither case is it feasible to demand accurate knowledge of large fields. Power, not organized knowledge, is the end of school training. Even if this were not so, the demands upon the secondary schools are so great and so various that it would be impossible for them, in the present state of American education, to equip their students to meet severe tests of their knowledge of the many subjects which it is necessary that they should study.

I scarcely need say that we are not concerned to any great extent with the purely preparatory schools. These are comparatively few in number and weak in influence. They are mostly preparing for some particular college, and have only to do what that college asks them to do. In fact, they exist to do what the college wishes done. Nowadays they train only a fraction of those who go to college, and those trained by them are not on the whole the most capable and successful students, either in school or in college. That this is so is not their fault, and they do what they set themselves to do most faithfully and efficiently. The other secondary schools have a greater responsibility and a wider field—I think I may safely add, a higher mission. They must prepare for any college. They must also furnish a sound, serviceable training to those of their students who will not go to college. Add to this the shortness of the school course and the

lack of co-ordination between elementary and secondary education, and the difficulties are enough to appall the stoutest heart. The colleges might make our problem easier if they would, and, at any rate, we must know what it is we are called upon to do, if we are to accomplish the task. Is it not this—to train the mind to be a good working instrument, and to help the boy or girl to see the beauties, to meet the temptations, and to bear the responsibilities of life?

Here again the college requirements appear above the horizon. We must train the mind to be a good instrument for the work of the college. That is the demand that we are facing in this view of the college-entrance requirements. I purpose to turn to the classics, and to endeavor to make it clear that the college and the school may unite to their mutual advantage upon a true test of the preparatory work, which shall not impose upon the school an alien and tyrannical authority. I shall confine myself to Latin in the treatment of details, for the sake of the gain in definiteness. What should the teacher of Latin aim at? Let it be said that many a teacher does not know what he is aiming at, and those who do know cannot always tell why they are aiming at it. It seems to me that the Latin course of the secondary school may be divided into two periods. In the first of these the language should be taught with reference to the training of the mind in logical and methodical habits, to the mastery of the elements of grammar and rhetoric of universal application, and to the cultivation of the power of attention and concentration. I believe that so much Latin as will accomplish these things may profitably be required of all students in our secondary schools. Two years' study of the language should suffice for this. I would have the work of these two years planned and carried out without the slightest reference to college-entrance requirements or examinations. Only those should go on who are likely to get an adequate return for the time spent, either in the way of literary training or in helpful knowledge of ancient life and thought. The work will center in the study of formal grammar, the memorizing of forms, and the application of rules of syntax to discovering the exact meaning of the text read.

During the later years of the course the chief object should be the cultivation of literary taste, and the second place should be given

to the Romans themselves, their institutions, and the influence they exerted upon European civilization. There should be large and varied reading of the best authors, the study of the science of translation, and the closest possible approximation to the art of translation, and so much consideration of men and events and institutions mentioned as is necessary to make the writer's meaning plain. The choice of authors and the choice between different parts of the works of each, together with the order in which they are to be read, should be left largely or wholly to the schools. I know by experience that the course of reading which proves good for one school may not meet the needs or the tastes or the abilities of another. Much indeed depends upon the teacher. His class will surely enjoy most the author which he enjoys most and reads with most enthusiasm. Moreover, the teacher is more likely to grow, less likely to petrify into an automaton, if his teaching ranges over a large field of literature. The same vivifying influence is felt directly in the school, as well as indirectly by reflection from the interest of the teacher. Advanced classes sometimes know an author too well. Students find it easier to lean upon those who have traveled the road before them than to break a way for themselves. On the other hand, I have known the introduction of a new author to inspire even those who were not compelled to read him, as they assisted their juniors or satisfied their own curiosity. Every year, after the first, some poetry should be read, and the study of an author should not continue so long at a time that teacher and student alike are utterly tired of him.

The certificate system of admission to college has this advantage, in the case of Latin and Greek, that the colleges admitting on certificate are generally willing to accept any reading of the required amount and the right sort, and without regard to the time when the particular author was read; whereas the examination system requires that the authors set for examination be read in the year of the examination. This, at any rate, most teachers feel to be necessary, if their students are to make a creditable showing on the examination. Could not the colleges which are unwilling to rely entirely upon certificates of the candidate's preparation safely and properly accept the statement of the schools as to the amount of Latin and Greek

read? I hope to show that they might still reserve to themselves an adequate test of the candidate's fitness to continue the study of the language in college and of his training. Indeed, I believe that the weakness of the certificate system might be remedied by such a test.

I think it will be agreed that, granting our premises, the test that will most surely discover the candidate's preparedness or unpreparedness for college, and at the same time do least violence to the ideals of the schools, the one that will bring school and college into the closest harmony, is the sight-examination. The ability to translate into idiomatic English a new piece of Latin gives evidence of an adequate preparation for the freshman Latin courses of the colleges, and of mental power and mental discipline. Such an examination can be made, moreover, to serve practically all the purposes of any examination in Latin. It will show the state of the candidate's knowledge of forms and of syntax, the extent of his vocabulary, his command of his own tongue, and even, if the passages are carefully chosen, his acquaintance with classical antiquity. That it is a most searching trial of the powers and discipline of the mind no one will deny who has considered the processes involved in the operation of rendering an ancient tongue into a modern.

The only difficulty is that the test may be too severe for some who might yet profitably take a college course. It is my belief, however, that it is entirely possible to set passages in infinite number and variety, previously unknown to the candidate, and so simple that the examiner may confidently say that those who cannot read them either are not of the caliber desired by the college or have not had the necessary training in the subject. The passage should be clear and complete in its meaning, and that meaning should be simple (for this reason description and narrative are the best material), and the words should be those of commonest occurrence, or, in case they are likely to be strange, their meaning should be given. But I should not make the sight-examination the sole test, lest the blindness that sometimes falls upon the boy and girl on examination cause injustice to be done in occasional cases, and lest the school and the student lose sight of the fact that the ability to translate at sight comes only by mastering the language and thoughtful reading.

The preliminary examination should include a test in grammar, and both the preliminary and the final examination might well include a searching test of the candidate's study of a small portion of the literature. The portion should be very small, so small that the study of it will not form a large part of the year's work or hamper the teacher in the choice of reading. I am of the opinion that a single oration of Cicero or a single book of Vergil is enough. If there is not to be both prose and poetry at sight, as I think there should be on both examinations, the preliminary as well as the final examination should have these set portions of both styles. This I urge from the conviction that no one of the later years of the course should be given exclusively to either prose or poetry. The prose, especially if only one author is read, palls, and the long-continued reading of poetry by young students not thoroughly grounded leads to neglect of the grammar. The requirements now generally in force bring about the division of the last two years of the course into one of undiluted Vergil and one of undiluted Cicero.

The questions on subject-matter should be confined to the passages from the work prescribed. This part of the examination in the classics is often unreasonable. No fault can be found with questions intended to discover whether the candidate understands what he is translating, but he cannot fairly be expected to have accurate knowledge of all the facts of history and all the details of public and private life alluded to in all the Latin he has read. The Roman reader for whom the books were written did not have all this knowledge in a definite form, if we may judge from ourselves. We do not find it necessary to our understanding and appreciation of even the current books we read to inform ourselves fully and accurately of all the names and events and facts mentioned in them. I see no reason why the Latin or Greek examiner should demand in these much more difficult subjects more than the examiner in French or German or English demands. I do not mean that the teacher is to feel free to neglect at the time of reading anything that will throw light upon that which is read, but only to protest against the tendency in some quarters to require that all that may properly come up in the teaching, and ought to come up, is proper material for examination. Should not the examiners in Latin and Greek leave ancient history

for the examination in that subject? If the colleges wish to demand a knowledge of ancient history from all who present themselves for an examination in the classics, the way is open to them. They have only to require that this subject be offered, as does Yale, for instance; and to me this seems an altogether wise and equitable requirement. The burden of preparation for this examination falls then upon the history teacher, not upon the teachers of Greek and Latin.

The questions in grammar may best perhaps be based on the prose prescribed, and the composition should certainly be based upon this. The grammatical questions should, it seems to me, be confined to the preliminary examination, that the last year of the school work may be free from the drudgery of review of elementary matters. Even on the preliminary paper the questions should not be too finicking, should not constitute a test of the candidate's knowledge of the beginner's book. If he can translate words accurately, it is evident that he has a working knowledge of the forms and their uses. I sometimes wonder whether examiners realize that, the forms once learned and the elements of syntax once mastered, the application of this knowledge becomes gradually unconscious, or subconscious. It is much better so. If it is found that a boy or girl can translate the verb with all the force of person, number, tense, mood, voice, why ask that the conjugation of the verb be kept up? We do not forever call for the saying of the alphabet or of the multiplication table.

To sum up, the best and fairest college-entrance examination is sight-translation; the results of the sight-examination might be corrected by the addition of tests of the work done on a very small amount of prescribed reading, and by grammatical questions; if a larger amount of reading must be made sure of, the certificate of the school should be accepted for this; the questions on the subject-matter should be limited to such as may be answered by one who understands the meaning of the passage. The preliminary examination would consist, then, of sight-translation of easy narrative or descriptive prose (Cæsar, Nepos, Livy, Quintus Curtius, and the like); passages from the prescribed prose and poetry (let us say Cicero's oration for the Manilian Law and the second book of the

Æneid, though the choice is a large one, and might range over a wide field if the amount is to be small), with such questions on the subject-matter as will bring out the meaning; and grammatical questions, with simple sentences for composition, based on the passage of prescribed prose. The advanced examination would contain sight-translation of prose and poetry, not necessarily limited to Cicero and Vergil; passages from prescribed prose and poetry (say the oration for Archias and the sixth book of the *Æneid*), with questions on the subject-matter; and a piece of connected prose to be turned into Latin, based upon the prescribed prose.

Such examinations, and any form of examination whatever, will be satisfactory only in proportion to the discretion of the examiner and his acquaintance with the conditions of the secondary school. It is no disrespect to the men who set the college-entrance examinations to say that they do not possess these qualifications in the same degree, and this is one of the strongest reasons for the delegation of entrance examinations to a joint board, such as we now have in the College Board. Individual idiosyncrasies are held in check, as has already been proved in the case of the board just mentioned, where many men unite for common action, and public opinion has greater freedom of expression and greater weight. Moreover, the correction of papers requires even more discretion than the setting of the questions, and many colleges set good papers, and then correct them according to so severe and nice a standard as to nullify the apparent reasonableness of the test, or with a liberality that seems attributable either to carelessness or to a fear that they cannot afford to abide by the result.

Those of you who are conversant with the Harvard requirements and examinations in Latin will doubtless have noticed that the sort of examination I propose is not so very different from those set by that institution. It is true that the principles upon which I rest my argument are in some important particulars identical with those governing the Harvard requirements, and I doubt not I have been influenced by Harvard ideas on this subject. I did not, however, begin to prepare boys for the Harvard examinations until I had had considerable experience in preparing for examinations of the other sort—and some experience in setting them—and a large pro-

portion of my students now enter other colleges than Harvard. My views, therefore, are not merely of the nature of theory. In some important respects they have stood the test of experience. I find the Harvard examinations in Latin more searching than examinations of the other sort, and at the same time they allow greater freedom to the school. It is partly because I am apprehensive that the Harvard plan may lose ground in the advance toward uniform requirements that I have wished to hear this subject discussed under the auspices of this association, behind whose authority the definitions of the College Board requirements are intrenched. The recent changes in the Latin requirement for Harvard give ground for uneasiness, since they increase materially the amount of prescribed reading.

The English universities are content with the simplest requirements of those entering upon candidacy for the B.A. degree. At Cambridge, a candidate for the B.A. degree must have passed the Previous Examination, and some of the colleges at least, for instance Gonville and Caius and Trinity, exempt candidates for admission from the entrance examinations if they have passed the Previous Examination. The Latin papers set for this examination are three: (1) "a paper on one of the Latin classics containing (*a*) passages for translation with grammatical or other questions immediately arising thereupon, (*b*) questions on the subject-matter;" (2) "a paper containing two or more easy unprepared passages of Latin to be translated into English, the use of a dictionary being allowed;" and (3) "a paper containing elementary questions on Latin accidence and syntax with reference principally to the set subjects." It is also provided that for the first paper there may "be substituted a paper containing two or more unprepared passages of Latin of ordinary difficulty, not contained in the set book, to be translated into English without the use of a dictionary, together with grammatical questions arising thereupon." Notice of the subjects of examination for each civil year is issued before the middle of the Lent term of the civil year immediately preceding. The special Board for Classics is required to "so limit the subjects of the examination that the persons who are to be examined may be reasonably expected to show a competent knowledge of all the subjects." All these papers are simple, but they are probably marked severely.

The Latin classic set for 1900 was the sixth book of the *Æneid*; for 1903, Cicero's oration for Sulla. At Oxford, Responsions take the place of Cambridge's Previous Examination. Candidates must offer grammar; "translation from English into Latin prose;" and "two books, one Greek and one Latin, or unseen translation." The choice of authors is a wide one. In Latin the list from which selection is made by the candidate is as follows: Cæsar's *Gallie War*, I to IV; Cicero, the first two Philippics, or the Catilinarian orations and Act I *In Verrem*, or the orations for Murena and for the Manilian Law, or the *De Senectute* and the *De Amicitia*; Horace's *Odes*, or *Satires*, or *Epistles*; two books of Livy; Vergil's *Bucolics* with three books of the *Æneid*, or five books of the *Æneid*.

Finally, what are we to do if we do not succeed in getting the sort of examination we desire? I hope we may have the clearness of vision to see our duty, and the strength to do it. Let us teach Latin and Greek, not the method of passing an entrance examination in Latin or Greek. Let us strive to make the study of these languages do all it is capable of doing for our boys and girls, and for the cause of American education. We shall then read what seems to us most helpful, when it seems best, and as we have time and strength and inspiration. The entrance requirements will, after all, take care of themselves, if we will remember that they are not for us, but for the college. If we are teaching as we ought, we should have little reason to fear the entrance examinations; but in case our students do not succeed in passing them, let us first examine ourselves, and then, if we are assured that we are doing our higher duty, be content to fail. To such an attitude as this the colleges must soon adapt themselves, and the result, I am persuaded, would be a distinct gain to all concerned. As it is, the college requirements are not so rigid as they seem. They are not allowed to hamper unduly the applicant for admission, but are useful in the way of intimidating the school. Most of the institutions which demand ostensibly a fixed amount of reading allow final candidates to write the examination in the prescribed authors without exacting any certificate that the reading has been done. The student is allowed to take the examination as a sight-examination, while the work of the school in preparing him is appraised on the assumption that he has read the authors in the school.